

Message Text

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, CO
SUBJ: POLITICAL SUMMARIES: THE WEEK IN COLOMBIA

1. SUMMARY. ALTHOUGH THE ROUTINE REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RESULTS CONTINUES, BOTH OF THE MAJOR PARTIES HAVE BEGUN TO THINK ABOUT THE FORMATION OF A TURBAY GOVERNMENT. PRESIDENT LOPEZ CONFIRMED THE GOC'S RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ALSO PROPOSED LEGISLATION WHICH SHOULD FAVORABLY AFFECT THE NARCOTICS INTERDICTION PROGRAM. THE GOC TOOK STEPS TO CUT JAPANESE IMPORTS IN AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE COLOMBIA'S TRADE BALANCE WITH THAT NATION. THE POST-ELECTION ATMOSPHERE REMAINS TRANQUIL. END SUMMARY.

2. LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES LOOKING AHEAD TO FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. THE FIRST AND MOST IMPORTANT ROUND OF THE LEGALLY REQUIRED REVIEW OF PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION BALLOTS, AT THE VOTING DISTRICT LEVEL, HAS NOT REVEALED SIGNIFICANT DISCREPANCIES AND VIRTUALLY ALL CONSERVATIVES NOW ACCEPT THE FACT THAT JULIO CESAR
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TURBAY WILL BE COLOMBIA'S NEXT PRESIDENT. SOURCES CLOSE TO BETANCUR BELIEVE THAT THE DEFEATED CONSERVATIVE CANDIDATE WILL SOON CONCEDE, RATHER THAN AWAIT THE ELECTORAL COURT'S OFFICIAL DECLARATION WHICH SHOULD BE ANNOUNCED AROUND JUNE 25. THE MINDS OF LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE PARTY LEADERS ARE NOW FOCUSSED ON THE COMPOSITION OF TURBAY'S GOVERNMENT AND ON HOW THE PRESIDENT-ELECT WILL DIVIDE THE SPOILS BETWEEN THE PARTIES AND THEIR DIFFERENT FACTIONS.

CONSERVATIVES EXPECT PROBABLY CORRECTLY, THAT THEIR SHARE WILL BE LARGE, PERHAPS SIMILAR TO THE EVEN DIVISION OF APPOINTED POSITIONS WHICH CHARACTERIZED THE "PARITY" ARRANGEMENT OF THE NATIONAL FRONT PERIOD. TURBAY HIMSELF ALLUDED TO THIS POSSIBILITY IN HIS JUNE 5 STATEMENT (BOGOTA 5344). MEANWHILE, TURBAY IS PROCEEDING TO RESTRUCTURE THE LIBERAL PARTY'S ORGANIZATION, HAVING ANNOUNCED HIS RESIGNATION AS THE PARTY'S "SOLE CHIEF," AND HAS CALLED A PARTY CONVENTION ON AUGUST 2 TO ELECT NEW DIRECTIVE BODIES. HE WILL PROBABLY ATTEMPT TO HEAL CONTINUING DISAFFECTIONS AMONG LIBERALS WHICH THE ELECTIONS REVEALED, BY TRYING TO BRING DISSENT ELEMENTS INTO THE ORGANIZATION. COMMENT: NOW THAT THE SUSPENSE AND DISAPPOINTMENT HAVE PASSED, LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES SEEM GENERALLY PLEASED, OR AT LEAST RECONCILED, OVER THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION. THE SITUATION WHICH HAS EMERGED, IN WHICH THE ELECTORAL VERDICT WAS CLOSE AND VARIOUS PARTY AND FACTION INTERESTS AND CLAIMS MUST BE ACCOMMODATED IS ONE WHICH TURBAY SEEMS IDEALLY QUALIFIED TO MANAGE, BY EXPERIENCE AS WELL AS BY TEMPERAMENT. THE NEW GOVERNMENT IS LIKELY TO BE BROADLY BASED, INCLUDING MAJOR FACTIONS OF BOTH PARTIES, STRONGLY REMINISCENT OF THE NATIONAL FRONT ARRANGEMENT.

3. PRESIDENT CONFIRMS RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. PRESIDENT LOPEZ, IN A LETTER TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, REAFFIRMED THE GOC'S POLICY OF RESPECTING INTERNATIONALLY RECOGNIZED HUMAN RIGHTS AND ASKED FOR A PROMPT INVESTIGATION OF CHARGES THAT POLICE HAD TORTURED SUSPECTED URBAN TERRORIST CARLOS REYES. THE PRESIDENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NOTED THAT "IT IS IN THE PUBLIC INTEREST TO CLEARLY ESTABLISH THAT NEITHER COLOMBIAN LEGISLATION NOR THE POLICY DEVELOPED BY SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS HAS PERMITTED ANY FORM OF PHYSICAL TORTURE TO OBTAIN CONFESSIONS FROM PRISONERS." THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, IN HIS RESPONSE TO THE PRESIDENT, NOTED THAT THE INVESTIGATION OF THE ACCUSATIONS WAS WELL UNDERWAY AND THAT FOUR POLICE OFFICERS HAVE BEEN CHARGED. COMMENT: WHILE INFRINGEMENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS DO OCCUR IN COLOMBIA, THIS LATEST INCIDENT IS EVIDENCE OF THE GOC'S DETERMINATION NOT TO TOLERATE SUCH VIOLATIONS.

4. JUDICIAL REFORM LEGISLATION WOULD EFFECT DRUG PROGRAM. THE LOPEZ ADMINISTRATION HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL SUBMIT JUDICIAL REFORM LEGISLATION TO THE JULY 20 SESSION OF CONGRESS. THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION WILL INCLUDE MANY OF THE REFORMS WHICH LOPEZ HAD INTENDED TO PRESENT TO THE PLANNED CONSTITUTENT ASSEMBLY, WHOSE ENACTING LEGISLATION WAS CELEARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL (BOGOTA 4524). COMMENT: WHILE SUCH REFORM LEGISLATION WOULD PERHAPS NOT BE AS FAR-REACHING AS THE PRODUCT OF A CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, IT SHOULD BE HELPFUL TO THE NARCOTICS INTERDICTION PROGRAM AND TO THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNAL SECURITY.

5. COLOMBIA RESTRICTS JAPANESE IMPORTS. IN AN ATTEMPT TO REDUCE

COLOMBIA'S \$130 MILLION TRADE DEFICIT WITH JAPAN, THE COLOMBIAN FOREIGN TRADE INSTITUTE (INCOMEZ) TEMPORARILY HAS STOPPED ISSUING IMPORT LICENSES FOR MOST JAPANESE DURABLE GOODS INCLUDING JEEPS AND OTHER VEHICLES, ELECTRONIC GOODS, AND DOMESTIC APPLIANCES. DURABLE GOODS ACCOUNT FOR APPROXIMATELY 60 PERCENT OF COLOMBIAN IMPORTS FROM JAPAN. RECENT EFFORTS BY A COLOMBIAN-JAPANESE MIXED COMMISSION APPEAR TO HAVE FAILED TO INCREASE PURCHASES OF COLOMBIAN GOODS BY JAPAN. INCOMEX OFFICIALS REPORT THAT THE JAPANESE ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED AND A HIGH-LEVEL TRADE DELEGATION IS EXPECTED SHORTLY IN BOGOTA.

6. POST-ELECTION CALM CONTINUES. COLOMBIA'S POST-ELECTION TRANQUILITY CONTINUES, AS EVIDENCED BY THE DECISION OF NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OFFICIALS TO REOPEN THE SCHOOL, CLOSED BECAUSE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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STUDENT DISORDERS SINCE LATE MAY, ON JUNE 20. MARRING THE RELATIVELY PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE WAS THE MURDER OF A NINETEEN-YEAR OLD KIDNAP VICTIM IN MEDELLIN. ALTHOUGH UNCONFIRMED, SOME NEWSPAPER REPORTS IMPLICATED THE REVOLUTIONARY ARMED FORCES OF COLOMBIA (FARC) IN THE CRIME.
JOHNSTON

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